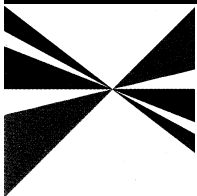


Livable Places PROFILES

OLD TOWN MONROVIA *Monrovia, CA*



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

1996

A diverse residential community that has worked together on downtown revitalization, Monrovia was recognized in 1995 as an All-American City, the prestigious annual award given by the National Civic League.



Old Town Brings Pedestrian-Oriented Community Center to Monrovia

Case Study
Total Acres
19

City
Population
37,500

Avg. Minimum
& Maximum
Temperature
52° → 78°

Key Features

Myrtle Avenue
Retail District

Library Park

Weekly Family
Festival.

Monrovia has maintained its small town character and charm, making it a popular film and television setting. But Monrovia's downtown was dying when business and civic leaders collaborated to reinvest in the historic Old Town.

Today, the Weekly Family Festival on Myrtle Avenue draws thousands of residents of all ages and has become the largest weekly street fair in California. Local merchants have established a strong and loyal following and a movie complex is on the drawing board. Volunteers constructed a Rose Parade float that showcased the area for the world this year.



▲ A poster announcing the Monrovia Family Festival, held every Friday.



Surrounding housing fosters downtown vitality.



Street frontage at Von's Pavilions.



Performers on stage at a summer concert in the park.



Art classes for children in the park.

Public / Private Investment

One million dollars was spent on the original beautification of Myrtle Avenue that included enhanced lighting, street furniture, attractive signage and ample rear parking. Traffic was reduced to two lanes with widened sidewalks, decorative paving, narrowed intersections and mid-block crossings to reduce speeds and improve pedestrian safety and enjoyment.

Special Features and Events

Library Park is an attractive oasis along Myrtle Avenue that includes a library, children's play area and a community band-shell used for free weekly community concerts throughout the summer months.

Every Friday night, four blocks of Myrtle Avenue are closed off for the Family Festival that includes a farmer's market, more than 100 arts and crafts vendors, music, booths promoting local community organizations, food vendors, horse and buggy rides as well as rides and entertainment for kids.

There is also a busy Von's Pavilions Supermarket sited at the north end of the Myrtle area. Small shops on the Myrtle Avenue side and a pedestrian arcade that links to the main entrance ensures that it is pedestrian-friendly and well-integrated to encourage walking connections to the rest of Old Town.

Future Plans

Night time uses are being encouraged, including restaurants, theaters and clubs. The city is negotiating to bring a multi-screen movie complex to Myrtle Avenue. Old Town will continue to be promoted and enhanced as a pedestrian-oriented center of a diverse and proud community.

Lessons Learned

Cooperation is vital between the city and the business community. The weekly family festival and other special events make the area not only a retail attraction, but a community meeting place. Local businesses strengthen loyalty and provide a unique draw.



The Local Government Commission and the Center for Livable Communities are EPA Transportation Partners.

Funding for this series of livable community profiles is provided by the Southern California Association of Governments.



Large crowds are drawn every year to the summer concerts in Monrovia's Library Park, a central focal point for socializing and a strong sense of community.



Monrovia's "Historic Old Town" banner welcomes visitors.

Old Town Monrovia

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Restoring Old Town

During the early years of Monrovia's history, Myrtle Avenue was the heart of the small residential community. But competition with newer shopping centers left the street a virtual ghost town, with nearly half of the storefronts vacant. During the late 1970's, the city government and Chamber of Commerce made a commitment to revitalize the city, beginning with the historic downtown. Two years of community meetings with businesses and residents led to the commitment to reinvest in Myrtle Avenue as a small-scale local shopping area. The streetscape was dramatically improved and commercial loans were made to strengthen local businesses.

Recently businesses and citizens collaborated on the *Vision 2020* Committee, developing a five-year strategy for continued improvement to the area.

Transportation and Access

Myrtle Avenue has freeway access and a total of 2,284 parking spaces are located in the Old Town area, including 1,167 in city parking lots and 1,117 attached to private businesses.

There is bus transit to other parts of the city and the region. A dedicated bike path throughout the city connects downtown with other neighborhoods. There are ten bicycle parking areas with racks in the downtown area.



Sidewalk dining at twilight.



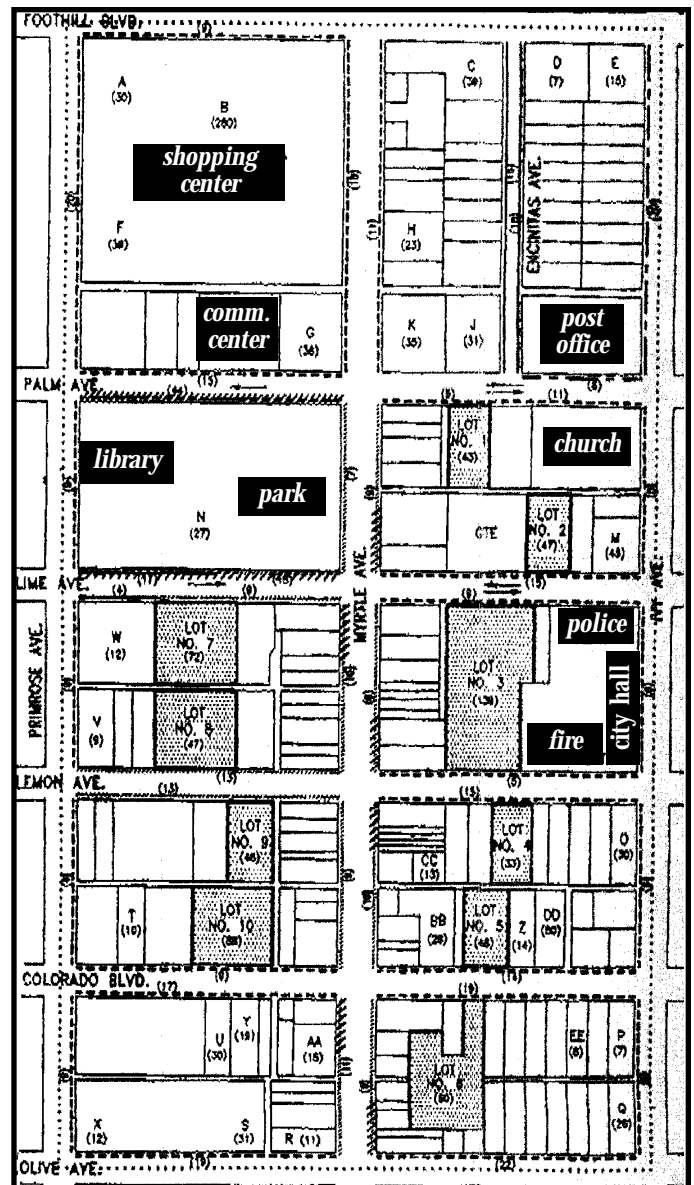
Monrovia's parks are an ideal place for children and families.

Mix of Uses

Old Town Monrovia is predominantly retail, mostly small shops and services, along with a major supermarket. There are also restaurants, cafes and small offices, including medical uses and bank branches. Library Park includes the city's library, play areas and a bandshell. Other civic uses are City Hall, including the fire and police stations, the post office, and a community center. Surrounding uses include high-density residential – apartments and condominiums – as well as large commercial and industrial business locations.

Reasons for Success

The Old Town area draws on both history and the contemporary appeal of a wholesome, walkable downtown community. The small scale (just five blocks long) and the investment in pedestrian amenities make it a natural place to stroll and linger. A strong merchants association has helped locally owned businesses to compete against chain stores and malls. There is a strong sense of community pride, promoted by events that draw families from the city's diverse residential neighborhoods. There is a long-term vision and commitment by the city government and its citizens.



A vicinity map of Old Town Monrovia shows how key uses are grouped together to create a pedestrian-oriented community.